

CutBank

Volume 1
Issue 65 *CutBank* 65

Article 35

Winter 2006

Isochronous

Karen An-Hwei Lee

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/cutbank>



Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#)

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Recommended Citation

Lee, Karen An-Hwei (2006) "Isochronous," *CutBank*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 65 , Article 35.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/cutbank/vol1/iss65/35>

This Poetry is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in CutBank by an authorized editor of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact scholarworks@mso.umt.edu.

Isochronous (Equal Or Uniform In Time)

1. *Slow movement of seasons from light to shadow.*

Ways of keeping time, rotating once in two lunations, spinning wheel
suspended between planes to verify freedom and proper end shape,
cogs brushed clean, symmetry of a pair of hands working side by side,
heads of children turning in a pool of water, swimming clockwise
bathing the heads of children daily, a gardener's beautiful eye glasses,
affection and sustenance, plenitude is beauty to the eye
of a child who hungers in a long winter of suspended comfort,
slow movement of seasons from light to shadow to light
once more, the desire of a child for every passing eye
to summon attention to one corner of the universe, honest face of a clock
half in shadow, half in sun, one day and night equal or uniform in time
to isochronous movements, not wandering stars or planets, but thin trails of
solicitude,
visible rain falling softly as the child taps out a moonlit sonata in a minor key.

2. *Gravity of sonata in motion with light.*

Slow motion, a blank hour turns and turns, pinned by a wire of soft steel,
a pinion whose leaves are machine-cut, centered, and rough-turned true,
aperture centered by trueing wheels, collet turned from brass and
embedded with soft solder or driven onto a tapered arbor, solid

glittering train of chime mechanisms, gravity of sonata in motion with light influencing intervals of thought approaching the speed of distances magnified as a word passes through a window of time opening slowly to the road of an open hour, *rallentando* or an allotrope of carbon with gradual intensifications lengthening a smooth gray curve where rough drafts, unfinished yet smooth and worn as pencil lead, silent as time dilation, magnify traces of allotropic diamond, plumbago on a gray line, graphite collation of images traced as a dual matter of body and memory mingled with quiet inspiration, novelty.

3. A thousand rains could not lift her face.

Hours a millennium ago assumed equal to the hour now, yet inscriptions on an ancient bone imply the length of day was shorter then, so is the world slowing on a transparent axis of time, minute dilation of spatial or temporal intervals in the difference between twelve local noon, sun due south, and twelve o'clock noon by the clock, faster than the sun, or some times of the year both coincide, while other moments a difference of nearly a quarter of an hour exists, a day shortened by a hair's breadth, less than an eyelash or hand leafing through the chronicle of spring and autumn annals, leaves loosening at the spine, paper tumbling inside wind, years and years shimmering in generations of a family tree, the same story is told until details change and others emerge, a thousand rains could not lift her face, turn back the hand of time, a river of a thousand black ravens spanned their infamous love, over and over a story is recited about the weeping spring bride, a blooming cherry tree stolen and found alive in the city,

or an early woman pilot in the western hemisphere
who flew in a cage of silk and bamboo her husband made,
so goes another tale, a thousand rains could not lift her grief,
a thousand rains could not lift the ash or lighten her mood,
witnesses recorded meteor showers and a star vanishing
the day before her disappearance so bright it was seen
at noon, and witnesses recorded a rain of hot stones
out of the milk river of woe in the night, intimacy
of a weaver maid and shepherd shouldered by ravens
dark as the new moon, dark wings parting dark tears
to cross an infinite abyss created by incontinent passion,
a thousand stories out of the tree collapse into warm ash,
a thousand stars lengthen into gray lines of falling rain,
a thousand years shorten into a postmodern noon
where a natural satellite is covered in sackcloth and ash,
quiet hour of lunar eclipse measured by one fifth of a geng
after the regular calls of the night watchman.

4. *A woman who floated there without comment.*

To make a polish, dissolve an ounce of silver nitrate in water
and add salt to precipitate the silver. Water solution decanted,
rinsed and allowed to settle, this is chloride of silver
grains mixed with salt and cream of tartar for paste
the color of moon ash suitable for cleaning small parts,
reducing error inside clocks, under the faces, what lies beneath
fabled cassia groves which cannot be cut down, silver leaf
of ash inside a porcelain pot, gray polish for silverware
and heirlooms, barren palace where a hare lives in peace,

keep a little paste in a jar, recommend it for household use,
tooth polish for a woman who floated there without comment
after swallowing the elixir of life, every ink atom of night
and a hairpin did not form the milk stream separating lovers
in the sky, put a little of this paste on the bottom of the moon,
see it rise as a mound of bread joined to the night, towing
the day as it sails over a city toward a line of happiness
where the sky is new wine in the west, notice the night never
puckers or wrinkles at the seam where it attaches to day,
equally sleek as the smooth seed of a melon, solace
only the lone bookbinder awake in the small hours knows,
laying midnight aside in dark felt leaves on her book press,
tears mended with onion skin, fish glue for broken pages,
a spine pressed, strengthened, relief for aching desolation
of winter nights burning with the silent labor of her hands,
wondering about a woman who floated up there,
what she would say, smiling, every other tooth silver.